

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING DON GRUNEISEN FOR RECEIVING THE PRESTIGIOUS BETSY KAPLAN AWARD

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 3, 2021

Ms. STEFANIK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Don Gruneisen for receiving the prestigious Betsy Kaplan Award from the St. Lawrence County Republican Committee.

Mr. Gruneisen has been a dedicated community leader in St. Lawrence County for decades. Since he first became active in local politics in the 1980s, he has been a consistent voice for the members of his community and the causes that he believes in. Today, he serves as the St. Lawrence County Republican Committee Treasurer, a Regional GOP Chairman, and as the Potsdam Republican Town Chair.

The Betsy Kaplan Award, named after a former St. Lawrence County Republican Committee Chairperson, is given by the St. Lawrence County Republican Executive Committee to Republicans who go above and beyond to serve their North Country community. Based on Mr. Gruneisen's decades of activism and service, he is undoubtedly deserving of this recognition. On behalf of New York's 21st District, I thank Mr. Gruneisen for his service to the North Country and congratulate him on receiving this award.

HONORING THE CAREER AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF TOM FLORES

HON. DAVID G. VALADAO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 3, 2021

Mr. VALADAO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Tom Flores for his outstanding professional football career and his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Tom Flores, born in Fresno and raised in Sanger, California, was inducted to the Pro Football Hall of Fame on August 8, 2021. After playing as quarterback for Fresno City College and then University of the Pacific, Flores began his professional career with the Calgary Stampeders of Canadian Football League. Although he would be cut in 1958 and cut from the Washington Redskins of the National Football League (NFL) in 1959, Flores won the starting quarterback position with the American Football League's Oakland Raiders in 1960.

During his career, Flores also played for the Buffalo Bills and the Kansas City Chiefs, winning his first Super Bowl as quarterback with the latter in 1969. Following his retirement, Flores worked as an assistant coach with the Buffalo Bills and Oakland Raiders, later being named head coach for the Raiders in 1979

and leading the team to Super Bowl victories in 1980 and 1983.

After working as the President and General Manager of the Seattle Seahawks, Flores went on to lead the Seahawks as head coach for three seasons before spending over 20 years as a radio analyst with the Raiders.

Despite his incredible success, Flores never forget his roots. His foundation, the Tom Flores Foundation, raised nearly 2 million dollars for Sanger Unified School District art, science, and athletic programs. In addition to being the first Hispanic quarterback in the American professional football, Flores is also the first Hispanic head coach in NFL history. The son of immigrants, he is an inspiration to countless young athletes in the Central Valley and all over the country.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating Tom Flores and honoring his contributions to the NFL and the Central Valley.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF WASHINGTON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY EUGENE "GENE" A. VITTONI II

HON. GUY RESCENTIALER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 3, 2021

Mr. RESCENTIALER. Madam Speaker, I rise to remember the life of Washington County District Attorney (DA) Eugene "Gene" A. Vittone, II, who passed away on August 21st, 2021 at the age of 61.

A Washington County, Pennsylvania native, Gene Vittone grew up in Monongahela and graduated from Peters Township High School in 1977. He earned a degree in biological science, graduating from the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) in 1981. Gene later returned to Pitt to earn a master's degree in health administration and business administration.

Following graduation, Gene felt the call to help others and became a paramedic, later helping manage Ambulance and Chair EMS in Washington. Gene attended Duquesne University's law program, while still serving as a paramedic, and graduated in 1997. He maintained his paramedic certification for the rest of his life.

Gene started in the Washington County DA's office as an assistant DA in 1998. While there, he handled juvenile court and several trial lists and covered felony criminal trials. Gene also developed the Drug Treatment Court for the county.

In 2011, Gene was elected top prosecutor and began his term as the opioid crisis was unfolding in Pennsylvania and across the nation. As co-chair of the Opioid Overdose Coalition, he was adamant that law enforcement could not, "arrest their way out of" the opioid epidemic. Gene focused on treatment for users while aggressively pursuing dealers, oftentimes working across the aisle or with the

federal government. He was instrumental in bringing lifesaving Narcan to Washington County and pioneered the establishment of prescription drop-off boxes.

Gene was one of the first DAs in the area to introduce a full-time victim advocate to work alongside attorneys on domestic abuse cases. He was also committed to addressing elder abuse and served on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's Elder Law Task Force. His care for others fueled his incredible work ethic, and he continued to work throughout his battle with lung cancer. A testament to how much his peers respected him, Gene was elected president of the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association in July 2021.

Gene was a committed community member, father, and husband. He was an assistant Scout Leader for Troop 1419 in Bentleyville and coached baseball for the Bentworth Baseball Association. Gene sang with Washington Festival Chorale and his parish choir. He is survived by his wife, Jane Ann Vittone, and his two children, Michael and Laura.

Madam Speaker, even in his last days, Gene Vittone lived his life in service to others. He will always be remembered for the countless lives he saved in his fight against the ravages of the opioid crisis. I have no doubt that his incredible legacy will live on in Washington County and across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NATIONAL HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HBCU) CONFERENCE WEEK

HON. ALMA S. ADAMS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 3, 2021

Ms. ADAMS. Madam Speaker, today, I introduced a Resolution to recognize National Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Conference Week.

HBCUs are an integral part of our society—academically, socially, and economically. Recognizing the value of HBCUs is vital as we continue to look forward to a more equitable society for all.

To that end, this Resolution provides a brief historical overview of HBCUs and how they came to be, and reaffirms our collective commitment to support the students of these colleges and universities.

THANKING CHRISTOPHER MARTIN FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE HOUSE

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 3, 2021

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I rise to congratulate my constituent Christopher Martin on

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

his retirement this month after a career of more than thirty years as a distinguished Master Cabinet Maker for the U.S. House of Representatives. We depend so greatly on the talented carpentry staff to ensure that House offices are properly equipped to perform the people's work, and I want to thank all of those employees, like Chris, who are working hard to restore, maintain, and upgrade the furnishings of this historic building of more than two centuries.

Chris aspired to be a woodworker from a young age, and he attended the St. Mary's County Technical Center, now called the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center. After working on his family's tobacco farm and in several other jobs, including house-building, Chris applied for a job opening in the House cabinet shop. His father had worked for the Congress before serving in the U.S. military, and his mother, also previously in Congressional employment, drove him to the interview. Indeed, Chris grew up in a home steeped in public service and love of country.

Impressing the manager with the breadth of his woodworking knowledge and his hands-on skills, Chris was hired on the spot, and he began serving as an Apprentice Cabinet Maker. He started out running service calls and soon advanced to the position of Journeyman. Chris honed his skills on the job under the tutelage of his former Managers—Art Baltrym, Peter Shipman, and Anthony Thompson—all distinguished furniture makers. One of his most memorable tasks included redesigning the furnishings in the historic office used by Rep. JAMES CLYBURN, now the Democratic Whip. This included constructing a custom desk, glass cabinets, and a matching credenza, all still in use today. The cabinet shop was often called to perform other tasks in the historic Hall of the House, and Chris and his co-workers spent many hours refurbishing the seats on the House Floor and installing safety measures to protect Members in the years after the 9/11 attacks. He also worked on the Floor of the House and on the Speaker's dais and podium.

Chris has been the cabinet shop's Design Specialist for over ten years and has been responsible for designing every piece of constructed furniture during that time. He is considered an exceptionally valuable Master of the Trade. When reflecting on his achievements, Chris has cited countless committee-room renovations and his involvement in completing the equipment consoles on the daises in each of the House's committee rooms.

Chris was here twenty years ago during the tragic 9/11 attacks and the evacuation of the Capitol complex. He was at work when an earthquake struck the District of Columbia, ten years ago, causing structural damage and cracks to the Capitol Building. Chris was also on campus during the fatal shootings of U.S. Capitol Police Detective John Gibson and Officer Jacob Chestnut on July 24, 1998, as well as, earlier this year, during the attack on the Capitol on January 6, when he and so many others had to shelter in place. Like so many others serving in House employment, Chris has been a firsthand witness to history and to the challenges and threats facing the Capitol and all who work here.

During the COVID pandemic, Chris has taken a lead role in the shop. He has continued to demonstrate high standards with re-

spect to building and design, and he has been assigning work, answering calls, attending meetings, and handling shop attendance during these trying times and while working to protect the health and safety of his co-workers. I continue to express my admiration for all of those, like Chris and his colleagues, who are working here during the pandemic to keep Congress operating and to help Members perform their jobs for the American people.

Chris is retiring after an illustrious career in House employment, and I am told that he plans to spend more time pursuing his passions of fishing, hunting and drag racing while continuing to work part-time in electrical and woodworking. I hope all of my colleagues will join me in extending congratulations to Chris Martin for his many years of dedication, superb craftsmanship, and outstanding contributions to the U.S. House of Representatives, many of which we literally sit in today on this Floor. I join in wishing him a very enjoyable retirement and thank him for all of his hard work in service to this House and to our country.

HONORING TOM BURKE FOR HIS
SERVICE TO THE KERN COMMUNITY
COLLEGE DISTRICT

HON. KEVIN MCCARTHY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 3, 2021

Mr. MCCARTHY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Tom Burke for his exemplary leadership in serving the residents of Kern and Tulare County for 20 years in his role as the Kern Community College District (KCCD) Chief Financial Officer and Chancellor.

Tom graduated from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo in 1981, and has lived in Bakersfield, California since. Before working for the KCCD, Tom was employed by the Getty Oil Company from 1981 to 1985 and earned his master's degree from California State University, Bakersfield shortly thereafter. He moved on to work for Contel, a telecommunications company, until joining Bakersfield College in 1997 as the Director of Business Services. In 2001, Tom was tapped to be the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for the KCCD, beginning a long career serving community colleges in the Kern and Tulare counties. When Tom first took over as CFO, the district's finances were shaky and the fiscal reserve was only at 5% of its annual operating budget, making the district vulnerable to financial difficulties. As of this past year, the district's reserve is about 50% of its annual operating budget, making it one of the healthiest in the State of California. The turnaround is a testament to Tom's leadership and commitment to our community.

In 2017, Tom was appointed Chancellor of the KCCD, a widely supported move that was also endorsed by the Bakersfield College Student Government Association, who called him a "champion for student voice and concerns." While Tom retired from his role in July of this past year, his mark on the Kern Community College District will undoubtedly endure. As Chancellor, Tom oversaw Bakersfield College, Cerro Coso College, and Porterville College. His deep understanding of student's needs and higher education allowed the district to in-

crease its enrollment and seamlessly transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tom played a significant role in overseeing the management of the district's water-improved bond monies, which aimed to fund new construction projects throughout the KCCD, such as the Bakersfield College Vernon Valenzuela Veteran Resource Center. Under his leadership, Bakersfield College saw its largest graduating class in history, and the district's three schools were among California's community colleges that were least affected by the pandemic in terms of enrollment.

Throughout his 20-year tenure with the district, Tom devoted himself to improving community education and serving others. He has worked to ensure that all students are provided with the resources and services that are fundamental to an effective education, and in doing so, Tom has established himself as an educational standard and community leader of utmost integrity, generosity, and competency. I am grateful for Tom's friendship and the service he has provided for the Kern and Tulare communities. On behalf of the 23rd Congressional District of California, I wish Tom and his wife, Tina, the best as he embarks on this next chapter in his life.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JAMES
WILEY GAINES, JR.

HON. BRIAN BABIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 3, 2021

Mr. BABIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of James "Jim" Wiley Gaines, Jr., who passed away on Friday, August 27, 2021, at the age of 85. Jim was a longtime resident of Tyler County, and deeply respected by all who knew him.

Jim was born on July 19, 1936, in Houston, Texas to Evelyn and James Gaines. He was a U.S. Air Force serviceman stationed at Ellington Air Force Base in Houston when he and Lynette married. In 1964, they moved to Woodville and Jim went to work for his father-in-law, Leroy Davis, at Western Auto. Lynette and Jim were blessed with two daughters, Laura and Susan.

Jim served on numerous boards including but not limited to: serving as Past President of the Tyler County Chamber of Commerce; Past President of The Woodville Rotary Club; and a member of the Board of Trustees of The Woodville Independent School District. Jim was the recipient of the James E. Wheat Award which recognizes truly exceptional leaders. He unselfishly gave of his time and talents to the Tyler County Dogwood Festival, a festival that celebrates the traditions and beauty of East Texas.

In 1978, Jim pursued a new vocation, steadfastly serving as an R.N. He worked in both nursing and administration at the Tyler County Hospital. Jim also worked part-time at Woodville Health and Rehab which he felt was one of the most rewarding jobs he had ever had the privilege to perform. In 2020, he and Lynette moved to Beaumont to be closer to family.